



Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice in Michigan
PO Box 739 • East Lansing MI 48826 • www.michiganrcrc.org

July 25, 2012

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice in Michigan opposes HB 5711. It is a blatant attempt to impose one set of beliefs on those who have a different belief and value system. It is an effort to restrict access to a safe and legal medical procedure solely based on one set of beliefs.

We understand that there is no religious agreement on when life begins. We celebrate that this country was founded on the principle of religious diversity – where one set of religious views does not trump another's. We know that legislating among such diversity is challenging. However, this is why it is so important to leave very personal decisions to individuals and their own moral or religious values.

We understand that you work diligently to protect religious beliefs of all people. When doing so, please remember that when one set of religious beliefs starts to impede on another's that is no longer religious liberty, but intolerance.

While our member organizations are religiously and theologically diverse, they are unified in the commitment to preserve reproductive choice as a basic part of religious liberty.

This religious liberty is a cornerstone to our democracy. We are concerned that HB 5711 has adverse religious implications. Rabbi Amy Bigman, one of our clergy consultants, writes, "Judaism respects a fetus as a *potential* life, and places a very high priority on protecting it; however, the *existing* life of the mother takes precedence over the fetus. As such, there are circumstances in which a threat to a woman's life not only permits, but requires, an abortion. [*Ohalot* 7.6] There is no choice in this matter; the mother's life must be saved. All Jewish authorities agree on this." Rabbi Bigman and her colleagues fear bills such as HB 5713, that restrict medical decision-making of doctors and women, could lead to situations where Jewish women would be forced to violate *halacha* [Jewish law]. This, we believe, is contrary to the religious liberty principle.

Additionally, we believe that, as morally autonomous persons, women are entitled to make medical decisions concerning their health and reproductive lives, according to their faith and conscience as well as on factual, sound, safe and compassionate medical advice.

Many of our clergy believe that the ability of humans to make decisions and exercise free will is a gift from God. To deny people the opportunity to evaluate their choices using their values is an affront to this gift.

These bills have no basis in science or medicine. These bills are based on politics. These are burdensome and block access to a safe and legal medical procedure. Their intent is to push women toward a choice by limiting their options direct them away from choosing abortion. As people of faith, we believe it is morally wrong to stand in the way of a person's health and well-being and to dictate another's moral code.



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Provisions in these bills go against current federal laws and precedent. We are deeply troubled that there are no exemptions for rape, health of the woman, or medical emergencies. Many of our members remember what happened when abortion was not legal. We remember women who died from unsafe and botched abortions. It is unconscionable to allow women to die when there is a safe alternative.

Finally, we believe that the best way to prevent the need for abortions is to prevent unintended pregnancies by improving access to education and health care. The Prevention First Package includes bills that expand access to information and health care services that would reduce unintended pregnancies and thus, reduce the number of abortions. We support these commonsense policies as they are effective and also respect the individual as a moral decision maker.

Thank you for your time and please oppose HB 5711.

In Faith,

Rabbi Amy Bigman
Reverend Robert Frederick
Joy Whitten